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Entrepreneur Utilizes Business Resources to Help Company Bloom

CHARLESTON - After scribbling a list of her abilities and the names of potential clients on a napkin in a local restaurant, Kathleen DuBois decided to start her own marketing firm but needed a little help to get it started. That's when she turned to the West Virginia Small Business Development Center (WVSBDC) for the technical assistance to make her dream a reality.

Directed by Conley Salyer since 2001, the WVSBDC, partially funded by the Small Business Administration (SBA), comprises 12 satellite offices on the campuses of community and technical colleges throughout West Virginia and two located at Region One Workforce Investment Boards in Beckley and Summersville. The SBA is a federal government agency which helps maintain and strengthen the nation's economy by aiding, counseling, assisting and protecting the interests of small businesses. SBDC's and SCORE, "Counselors to America's Small Business," are valuable SBA resource partners who provide counseling services and management assistance, free of charge in most instances, to current and prospective small business owners.

Kevin Twohig, the state's small business ombudsman at the SBDC, and the other small business development counselors throughout West Virginia assist small businesses every day. Whether it's helping business owners through licensing procedures or writing business plans, the counselors work diligently to put the right people in business and keep them there. "Ninety-four percent of our clients' businesses that were started in 2002 were still in business two years later. We help people to determine whether they should go into business," says Salyer.

Conducting workshops on business structuring and licensing procedures, WVSBDC counselors also provide business advice on marketing, cash flow and pricing.

DuBois is one of Twohig's success stories, starting her marketing firm, DaisySeed Communications, Inc. located in Charleston, three years ago. After the first year in business, DuBois found her lifeline at the WVSBDC while watching a local television show. "I saw people from the SBDC being interviewed and it seemed as if they were speaking directly to me. I called them up and scheduled an appointment," she explained. Although DuBois had over 10 years experience in marketing and fundraising, she still needed Twohig's small business experience. "Kevin was like a savior to me. He helped to validate my path," she said. "He was a wealth of information and helped me to refine our business plan."

With Twohig's assistance, Dubois has created a second consulting firm, Progressity Development Solutions, which provides fundraising consulting services to nonprofit organizations and academic institutions. She became a certified fundraising executive in June 2003 and her nonprofit client roster includes West Virginia University Institute of Technology, Leadership West Virginia, ABLE Families, West Virginia Public Broadcasting and Roane General Hospital Foundation.

DaisySeed Communications recently received an honorable mention award from the U.S. Department of Justice for a campaign they developed to reduce and prevent gun violence, entitled, "Hard Time for Gun Crime."

Although DuBois seems to have overcome the struggles that many new businesses face, she says, “By surrounding myself with a core group of business experts, I can ensure top quality service to both DaisySeed and Progressity clients. That’s where a person like Kevin helps me.”

Working out of the Charleston Enterprise Center, DuBois was able to employ a full-time administrative assistant and plans to expand her consulting staff in the near future. To celebrate her business success, she receives a visit from the florist once a month. “I always said that once I knew my business was secure, I would have daisies delivered to our office once a month and that’s what we do.”

For more information on the SBA and the resources available to assist small business, contact the West Virginia District Office at 800-767-8052 ext. 8 or by email at wvinfo@sba.gov, or visit them on the web at www.sba.gov/wv.